

Potomac-Garrett State Forest  
FY-16  
Annual Work Plan



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## **I. State Forest Overview**

The Potomac-Garrett State Forests situated in southwestern Garrett County in Western Maryland have the distinction of being the birthplace of forestry conservation in Maryland. The generous donation of 1,917 acres by the Garrett Brothers in 1906 not only serves as the foundation of the Garrett State Forest, but is the root of both Maryland's present Public Lands system and Forest Service. Mountain forests, streams and valleys make up the nearly 19,000 acres of this State Forest. The forest cover is predominantly a second growth mixed hardwood forest dominated by mixed oaks, sugar and red maples, black cherry, basswood, ash and birch. The geography of this area provides for a wide range of growing conditions from the harsh, wind and ice swept ridge tops of Backbone Mountain to the deep rich slopes above the North Branch of the Potomac River. Much of the State Forestlands contain excellent quality hardwoods.

## **II. Annual Work Plan Summary**

In addition to the routine operations and management of the State Forest, the FY-16 Annual Work Plan for Potomac-Garrett State Forest details six “special management” projects and fifteen land management projects that will be the focus of the State Forest management staff for FY-16. All projects and proposals within this Plan have been developed to meet one or more of the Land Management Guidelines and Objectives as seen in the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan including:

***Forest Economy:*** *management activities with a purpose to maintain an economically sustainable forest and contribute to the local economy through providing forest-related employment and products*

***Forest Conservation:*** *management activities with a purpose to protect significant or unique natural communities and elements of biological diversity, including Ecologically Significant Areas, High Conservation Value Forests and old growth Forests. Old growth forest management serves to restore and/or enhance old growth forest structure and function.*

***Water Quality :*** *management activities designed to protect or improve ecological functions in protecting or enhancing water quality.*

***Wildlife Habitat:*** *management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance the ecological needs of the diversity of wildlife species and habitat types.*

***Recreation and Cultural Heritage:*** *management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance areas that serve as visual, public camping, designated trails, and other high public use areas.*

## **A. Special Management Projects Include:**

1. **Storm Damage Recovery** - October 2012's 'Super Storm Sandy' very effectively shut down all public access throughout the Potomac Garrett State Forests 59 miles of roads and trails that make up the State Forests transportation system. While the State Forest staff continued to work toward restoring access and function of the road and trail network, a severe summer thunder storm hit much of the State Forest over the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend, 2014. This storm left residents in the Oakland Area without power for 3-5 days, having caused widespread damage to trees throughout the area. The Garrett State Forest suffered considerable damage to road and trail side trees, setting back trail and road reclamation efforts nearly completed from the 2012 storm.
2. **Continued Development of the Certified, Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan** - with special focus on addressing items identified as in need of improvement as a result of the 2014 FSC/SFI Certification Audits.
3. **ESA Management Plan Development** – Forest management staff will begin to work with Natural Heritage staff to develop management plans for the 34 + ESA areas identified on the forest.
4. **Forest Stand Delineation, Inventory and Monitoring** – Completion of the 5-year project to re-inventory and redefine stands on the entire forest. With the initial effort to collect forest wide data completed, FY-16 will allow a thorough analysis of this complete data set from which further management plans will be derived. Inventory work will continue in the form of follow-up monitoring protocols associated with the initial inventory and certification requirements.
5. **Non-Native Invasive Species (NNIS) Inventory and Control Work** - The Sustainable Forest Management Plan calls for various responses to NNIS and the Forest Inventory Project has allowed for a broad view of the problem forest wide.
6. **Wallman Recreational Access Restoration Project** - In January of 2012, the Governor announced approximately \$23 million in the proposed capital budget for public land projects that will support nearly 300 jobs, help restore the environment, reduce energy usage, and improve services to visitors and citizens. Approximately \$300,000 of this will be directed to improving the public access and trail network on the Potomac - Garrett State Forests in 2014-2015. Improvements are planned for the Wallman Recreational Access Area.
7. **Garrett County Forests & Parks Natural Surface Trail Project**- Additional capital funds (approximately \$650,000) have been directed toward the development of a new nested loop bicycle trail network involving the Garrett State Forest, Herrington Manor and Swallow Falls State Parks. IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association) had been contracted to develop a plan and design this multi-phased trail

development. Concept plans have been developed. Planning and design work will begin in FY-16 for four phased projects to take place on the Garrett State Forest as part of the Garrett County Forests & Parks Natural Surface Trail Project.

### **B. Land Management Projects Include:**

-Continuation of the watershed protection project mitigating impacts of the harmful forest pest carried out as: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Mitigation / Red Spruce Restoration.

- Continuation of the ecosystem restoration project involving control of invasive, exotic plants in Backbone Mtn. and more broadly, forest wide.

- 13 silvicultural projects

5 Commercial Thinning Harvests on 270 acres including:

1 Immature hardwood stand of 62 acres.

1 Conifer plantation of 15 acres.

3 Mature hardwood stands, receiving shelterwood treatments. The first stage of these “2-Stage Shelterwood Systems” involves ‘establishment /seed cuts’ prescribed to create conditions suitable for seedling establishment. These proposals include light commercial harvests, as well as non-commercial work using low volume applications of herbicides to control interfering, undesirable vegetation. These projects require an investment up front to assure sustainable and diverse forest ecosystems for the future.

8 Noncommercial silvicultural practices to promote regeneration associated with the above noted commercial shelterwood thinnings including:

3 Projects to control interfering and undesirable woody vegetation to promote seedling establishment over 150 acres.

5 Projects to control interfering and undesirable fern, grass and non-native vegetation to promote seedling establishment over 265 acres.

Forest harvest operations are undertaken to utilize mature and dead/dying/diseased trees; to thin overstocked stands; to improve and diversify wildlife habitat; to effectively correct public safety concerns and issues; to reduce the forests vulnerability to insect attack, disease or wildfire hazard; to facilitate certain approved research needs; to improve certain aesthetic aspects of an area; and to improve the proportions of age class and species diversity within stands and management blocks. This forest has been intensively managed for over 100 years, utilizing both even and uneven-aged techniques via selective removals and regeneration harvests. Early records indicate that as cut over land was acquired, foresters ‘culled’ the forest, removing the poorly formed and damaged timber left behind in the wake of the cut and run practices employed by early timber speculators. By removing these undesirable trees, newly

forming seedlings were released from competition and were thus cultured into the future growing stock of trees that we enjoy today. The benefits of this work have been significant including: improved wildlife habitat diversity, improved forest health and more abundant mast production, improved utilization of gypsy moth damaged trees, reduced forest fire hazard, and the considerable financial contribution of management to the state and local economies as well as to those employed in the forest products industry.

The FY-16 Annual Work Plan calls for 5 harvests on 270 acres accounting for the harvest of approximately 634,000 Bd.ft. of hardwood saw timber, putting an estimated \$126,800 worth of raw wood products out into the local markets. Much of the silvicultural work laid out in this work plan is focused on initiating seedling development to better insure regeneration successes in future harvests. Much of the value of the harvests in the work plan will be directed back into the forest providing the essential investment in pre-harvest cultural work that will assure the long term sustainable management of these important forest resources.

The cultural operations and management projects outlined within the FY-16 Annual Work Plan are selected to provide significant contributions to sustainability of the forest resources found within the Potomac-Garrett State Forest and the ecosystems associated with it.